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ABSTRACT

The design for an instructional program whose objective is the acquisition of English must be viewed within wide parameters. The dimensions discussed are those that must be accounted for by a designer of materials appropriate for particular learners. These parameters are discussed to make teachers aware of what to look for and what kinds of results to expect from materials. The monumental task of presenting precoding and encoding information to a learner makes it necessary to organize and reduce this information to dimensions that can reasonably be taught in the classroom. The paper points out that the basis for the selection of information that comprises a learner's dialect is concerned with what the learner must know to begin to function in a different culture and strategies by which to add to such information. (Author)

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FACTORS TO BE CONSIDERED IN DESIGNING AN INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM IN ENGLISH FOR SPANISH SPEAKERS

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by

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In this paper I plan to discuss three factors which a developer of materials must account for in his design of instructional materials for Spanish speakers. These are:

1. the learner
2. syntax
3. subject matter content

First, an effective instructional program must be viewed from the standpoint of the learner. The age and maturation of the learner affect the way instructional objectives are accomplished as learning experiences. Results of experimental evidence dealing with first language acquisition described by Paula Menyuk[1] are valuable in the development of guidelines in the selection of objectives for pre-kindergarten, kindergarten, and first graders. For example, a program that takes into account sentence types which are in the repertoire of middle-class anglo children of the pre-kindergarten, kindergarten and first grade age level, offers a Spanish-speaking child not only the opportunity to learn "some English," but more importantly, offers the child the opportunity to acquire the language competency of

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[1]"Syntactic Rules Used by Children from Preschool Through First Grade," Child Development, XXXV (1964), 533-546.

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monolingual English speakers of that age level. Menyuk's matching of linguistic variables to chronological age illustrates how experimental evidence framed within the generative transformational framework has application for language teaching..

Another factor to be considered is concerned with what is known about the teaching of English. The role of linguistic and psychological models has to be accounted for in the design of an instructional program. Methodological issues such as how much competency in subject matter areas a teacher should possess to use the materials successfully must be examined. In discussing methodology the role of programmed homework and tutorial programs extend the learning experience beyond the classroom. In both cases, the relationship between learner and tutor is a one-to-one relationship. In the case of programmed homework, the designer of the materials, in effect, is the tutor. In both cases, the learner has immediate knowledge of results at each step, and in both cases the classroom teacher is free to give time to other activities. Tutors can be teacher aides or fellow students. Within the scope of methodology the specification of objectives must be considered. Specification of objectives in terms of learner behavior makes it possible for the teachers to know what is expected both in learner outcomes and in the evaluation of student performance.

In designing materials there are a number of syntactic factors to be considered.

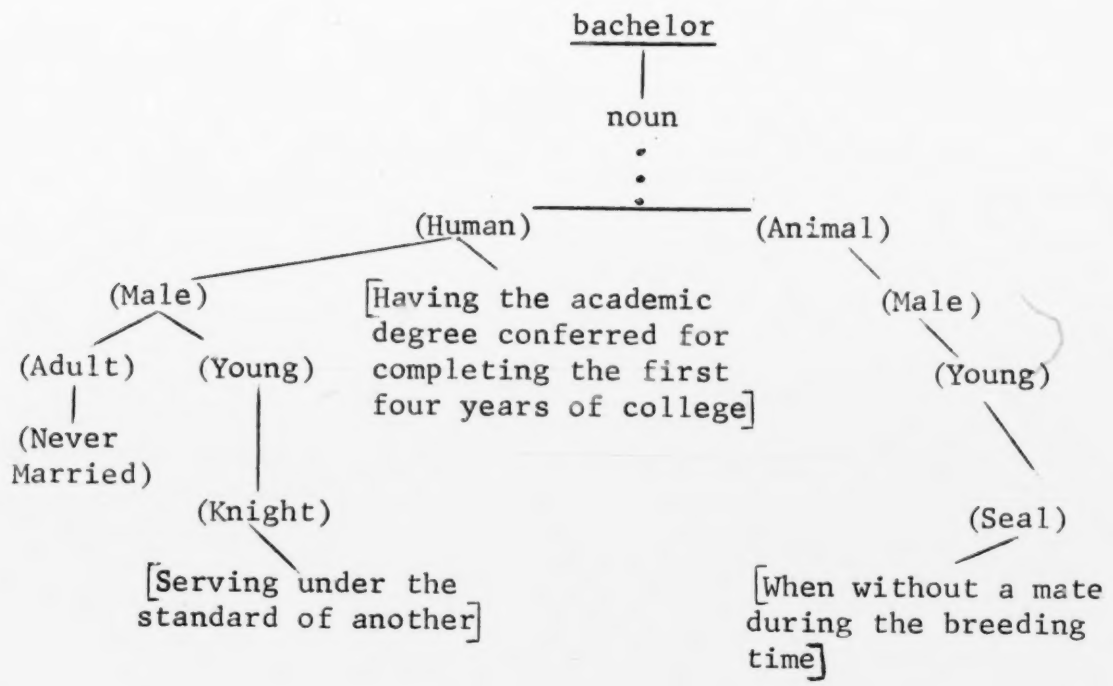
Syntax

It is assumed that every language has a fixed number of rules. However, no one has ever described a full set of rules in any language. Even with the rules that have been described, it is unreasonable to include them all in a pedagogical grammar. The amount of information that would have to be presented would be so overwhelming that there would not be enough classroom time to accomplish the task. In the area of the lexicon it is also apparent that no native learns all of the words and all of the meanings. The meanings that a learner needs are not of the kind that Jerrold Katz and Paul Postal propose. However, their description is consistent with linguistic theory which is not concerned with the limited vocabulary and meanings by which a learner begins to play a role in a language community. The theoretical linguist attempts to describe the total potential of the language and selects the best grammar that explains the language system. In their book An Integrated Theory of Linguistic Descriptions[2] the word bachelor is defined in the following ways:

1. an adult male never married
2. a young knight serving under the standard of another
3. a human having the academic degree conferred for completing the first four years of college
4. a male young seal without a mate during the breeding time.

[2]Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1964, p.14

Following is their linguistic description of bachelor showing various meanings:



The description above does not restrict the meanings of the word bachelor and thus does not serve the communication requirements of the learner. Most native speakers do not know all of the meanings of the term above. Consequently, the selection of the lexicon and meanings of words must meet the communication requirements of the learner. This leads to the conclusion that for lexical reasons as well, there has to be a different approach when discussing a pedagogical grammar. For the purposes of teaching a second language, a different kind of grammar must be written. Primarily, a pedagogical grammar must be written which describes what is useful to the speaker. For example, the definition of bachelor as an unmarried male and having the academic degree conferred for completion of four years of college are both useful definitions.

The other definitions of the word are useful only if one is concerned with the compilation of a dictionary. Talking about a young seal is an unlikely possibility for most learners.

Since pedagogical grammar cannot provide all of the information, the learner needs to internalize the complete system of the language, a reasonable goal for the learner is to control the inescapable and obligatory conventions of the languages. High frequency usage dictates that vocabulary be taught that is needed to carry on those indispensable activities such as social amenities, survival activities such as those involving eating, buying, seeking shelter, transportation, using money, and vocabulary relevant to health. In the case of very young learners, special attention has to be given to the lexicon that deals with mathematics and science so that learners will have the prerequisite knowledge to be able to carry out learning tasks that deal with those subject matter areas. Included with high frequency usage and other indispensable categories are:

Lexicon
Determiners
Functional and syntactic relators
Pronouns
Verbs including the copula
Basic morphology which includes tense and number
The phonemic system, including intonation
Phrase structure patterns
Some transformational rules, e.g., pronominalization, relativization

The information that a learner acquires, then, is incomplete in nature. In effect, the goal of a pedagogical grammar is to equip the learner with a Learner's Dialect and with strategies by which to add

to the information he possesses. The Learner's Dialect presented by the pedagogical grammar furnishes the framework which is critical to the learner of English so that he can function in the English speaking environment.

On the lexical level, the learner must be equipped with the necessary general terminology, and have enough control of the language to be able to add meanings to words he already uses. He must also be able to add words to those he already knows. In addition to syntactic categories such as determiners, prepositions, the words the learner acquires first should be cover terms. The cover terms are the basis by which he classifies new vocabulary words. For example, it would be expected that a learner would be able to talk about a tree though he might not be able to label a particular species. If he hears "oak," a speaker should be able to ask "What is an oak"? Upon being informed that it is a kind of tree, he should be able to continue with the conversation, decoding the term oak and encoding it under the category of the cover term tree.

In designing a pedagogical grammar, it is difficult to predict the precise vocabulary that a learner will find useful. This is the case whether pedagogical grammars are written for children or for adults. Consequently, from the standpoint of efficiency, again, the pedagogical grammar should contain the necessary cover terms that enable the learner to be understood by a native speaker. When the learner defines his field of interest, then he can expand his lexicon. Tree was used as an illustration. Doctor is another illustration of

a cover term. Most native speakers do not know all the various special terms used to describe a person who is classified as a medical doctor, e.g., surgeon, oculist, pathologist, dermatologist, pediatrician, ophthalmologist. Most native speakers of either English or Spanish do not know all the above terms unless they are associated with the medical profession, and it is unreasonable to expect learners to attempt to master such specialized terminology. A learner by the use of the cover term doctor, for example, can ask for an opthalmologist by referring to him as an eye doctor.

Content

It must be kept in mind that there is an inescapable relationship between vocabulary items and structure. Upon selecting a lexicon, then, particular syntactic patterns have to be taught to allow the word to be used in natural communication. To illustrate, if the word red is introduced, then the structure Adjective + Noun must be available to produce the red crayon. Other patterns must be available to produce What color is it?, The crayon is red, Is the crayon red?, Which crayon is red?, What's red?, Which one is red? Morphological distinctions must be built into the syntactic content to account for The crayons are red. The sequence of presentation should emphasize the relationship of structures to each other, though the primary goal should be communication. It follows that an instructional sequence must be developed that specifies the syntactic patterns and vocabulary content. A sequence of specific outcomes becomes the basis by which children acquire basic English skills while they are acquiring prerequisite and

enroute skills in important subject matter areas such as mathematics, social studies, and science. Whenever feasible, pictorial materials in the lessons should reflect objects and experiences common to the Spanish-speaking child. Phonological refinement should be accomplished by having the child hear good models and by communicating in different contexts and situations, so that his teacher or tutor may have many opportunities to produce the sounds correctly and correct the learner's utterances in a meaningful context.

It is expected that a student will learn in two or three years to express himself within modest limits in acceptable English. However, let's not forget that even the Ph.D. training in a foreign language does not produce a bilingual. The best that can be hoped for is acquisition of a Learner's Dialect so that bilingualism is attained through exposure to and involvement in the culture of the second language. The Spanish-speaker has the advantage, in many cases, of communicating in both his first and second language at school and also in his community.

In addition to acquiring a limited lexicon consisting of cover terms, the learner must also learn to use other strategies by which to expand his lexicon. He must use additional strategies commonly used by most native speakers. For example, a person going to a hardware store looking for a certain object which he cannot call by name might say, "I'd like to buy a 'gadget' or 'gizmo' that fits into the upper drain of the sink." In the same way, a native speaker of English who knows nothing about chemistry can speak with a chemist and acquire

the information he needs. By having the competency to ask questions and by being able to ask for examples and more explanations, a native speaker learns to add to his knowledge and language competency.

Another important strategy deals with sets. Knowing that particular words make up acceptable sentences is not sufficient, for a learner must be able to substitute other words within syntactic patterns that he already controls. To illustrate, to choose the preposition in in the sentence Put the pencil in the drawer., the learner must know that something is to be placed in a container. This, then, accounts for that preposition in the following phrases:

the pencil in the box
the book in the drawer
the girl in my office
I'll keep you in mind, etc.

On the other hand, when something is placed on a surface, the preposition on is used:

the book on the shelf
the girl on the beach
the leaf floating on the water
raindrops falling on my head, etc.

Rather than memorizing long lists of words, a learner must learn the basis for the categorization of words. Thus, as he learns new words, then can he know how they operate in the language system. It is much more economical to learn how categories of words operate rather than to attempt to memorize isolated words by rote. By learning a small number of words to reveal the set and the characteristics of the set, the learner is better able to classify additional words. The distinction between in/on is an example where the Spanish speaker

learns to make two separate distinctions, while one Spanish preposition can be used in both cases:

in the box	-	en la caja
on the box	-	en la caja

Practice should be provided to make sure that the learner has learned to make the conceptual distinction and to automatically produce the correct response.

If the Spanish-speaker learns to classify words into sets as he hears them, he can become aware of the restrictions imposed by the English language system and thus is able to produce these words in combinations which he has not heard before. For example, by hearing the man is cold, the coffee is cold, the learner can be made aware that in these structures using to be, animates and inanimates are collapsed, while Spanish uses different verbs, for example:

animate/inanimate			
The	boy cat water room	is	cold.

animate			
El	muchacho gato etc.	tiene	frío.

inanimate			
El	agua auto cuarto	es está	frío(a)

The memorization task must be minimized. Rote memorization does not reveal how the language system operates. To further illustrate, in English to have can be followed by a direct object representing an entity: I have a book. However, have cannot be followed by direct

objects which describe animate physical states:

* I have hunger.
thirst.

Thus, it must be made clear to the learner that in English possession of a physical state the verb <u>to be</u> is used.

ENGLISH			SPANISH		
<u>Possession of entity</u>			<u>Possession of entity/ possession of physical state</u>		
I have	a	book.	tengo	un	libro.
					sed
<u>Possession of physical state</u>					hambre
I am	thirsty.				
	hungry.				

When a learner differentiates conceptually between <u>I have a book</u> and <u>I am hungry</u> and uses different verbs, he is learning how to use <u>to have</u> and <u>to be</u> in a meaningful way. Learning how the English system operates is much more economical than attempting to memorize unrelated parts.

Another strategy used to increase vocabulary is to make the learner aware of the meanings he already knows, e.g., <u>eye glasses</u> is composed of two words. If a learner already knows the meaning of "eyes" he probably will be able to infer that with the word <u>glasses</u> the meaning is "eye glasses." Another strategy related to the one just described, concerns the meaning where a suffix offers a clue. If the learner is taught the fact that <u>-er</u> means "one who does the action described in the other part of the word," then <u>painter</u> must mean "one who paints."

The learner can also increase his word power by becoming aware of cognates. Important and importante resemble each other in both form and meaning. Older learners must develop the strategy consisting of looking for regularities between the two systems. In the following examples, the English cognate can be identified by deleting the final vowel of the Spanish form:

English	Spanish
important	importante
potent	potente
telephone	teléfono
effect	efecto

Once a learner has mastered a set of words, there is no reason for not using this information in a different language.

In conclusion, the following interrelated factors have been discussed:

1. An instructional program in English equips a learner with an incomplete mastery of the English system. The best that can be accomplished is to equip the learner with a Learner's Dialect so that he can function in an English speaking culture. Strategies also have been discussed by which the learner can add to the information that he already possesses.
2. Particular syntactic patterns are taught to allow content area to be used in natural communication.
3. Consideration must be given to the age of the learner and to the fact that he comes from a Spanish-speaking environment.